

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 9200

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR GR US

SUBJECT: FUTURE FLEET VISIT TO RHODES: VIEWS OF GREEK GOVENOR

1. DURING COURSE OF OFFICIAL VISIT TO RHODES LAST WEEKEND, DCM CALLED ON NOMARCH (GOVENOR) OF RHODES WHO IS KNOWN AS A CAPABLE ADMINISTRATOR AND WELL DISPOSED TOWARD US. IN RESPONSE TO DCM'S QUESTION, NOMARCH SAID THAT HE BELIEVED CLIMATE OF GREEK-US RELATIONS ON ISLAND HAD BEEN IMPROVING SLOWLY BUT PERCEPTIBLY IN THE PAST YEAR. THERE WAS OF COURSE A SMALL GROUP OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS WHO CONTINUED TO STROKE FIRES OF ANTI-AMERICANISM, BUT MAJORITY OF POPULATION RECOGNIZED NEED AND DESIRABILITY OF CLOSE US-GREEK RELATIONS.

2. DCM ASKED WHETHER IN LIGHT OF THIS SITUATION NOMARCH THOUGHT THAT US SHIP VISIT TO RHODES COULD BE SCHEDULED IN RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE WITHOUT CREATING POLITICALLY INSPIRED HUE AND CRY. NOMARCH OBSERVED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY TO AVOID INCIDENT OF THE KIND THAT OCCURRED EARLIER THIS YEAR IN CORFU WHEN VISIT HAD TO BE ABRUPTLY CANCELLED BECAUSE OF POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS. HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT FROM LOCAL STANDPOINT BEST TIMING WOULD BE LATE APRIL OR MAY WHEN TOURIST SEASON WAS
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GETTING UNDERWAY. ACTIVISTS WOULD THEN HAVE DIFFICULTY IN

GENERATING INTEREST OR SUPPORT FOR THEIR EFFORTS SINCE MOST OF THE POPULATION WOULD BE BUSY PREPARING FOR TOURIST SEASON AND WOULD OPPOSE PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT CLIMATE FOR TOURISM.

3. COMMENT: WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR CLOSELY ATMOSPHERE IN RHODES AND OTHER POTENTIAL PORTS-OF-CALL AND WILL AT EVERY APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY POINT OUT TO GREEK OFFICIALS IMPORTANCE AND DESIRABILITY OF RESUMING FLEET VISITS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN CASE OF RHODES, WE MAY DECIDE TO RECOMMEND REQUEST FOR VISIT BEFORE SPRING, BUT ARE REPORTING NOMARCH'S COMMENTS FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND BACKGROUND.
KUBISCH

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